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TWO SCHOOLMASTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE¹

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Among the many scholars who heralded and spread the Revival of Learning in all the countries of Europe not a few were schoolmasters, and schoolmasters who came to their profession with a complete and passionate conviction that on their fulfilment of their office depended, not only the learning, but the gentle manners, the government, and the morals of the world. The full brilliance of the Renaissance is seen in Italy alone; the courts of Urbino and Ferrara have no counterparts elsewhere; we see no northern school through the golden light that hangs about the school of Vittorino at Mantua. But scholars in the North were not behind the Italians in devotion to their purpose; to all, the aim of education was *utilitas*, efficiency as individuals and as members of communities; to all, Latin and Greek were an indispensable means to that end. If it is Alberti of Florence who says, "Letters can never be a hindrance, but are in the result a distinct source of strength to all who follow any profession whatever," it is Erasmus of Rotterdam who insists that "within the two literatures of Greece and Rome is contained all the knowledge that we recognize as vital to mankind."² All alike agreed in scoffing at the notion that classics corrupted morals, and the North, with its greater insistence on *pietas*, so far from lowering the standard of learning found in letters the road to virtue and in virtue the mark of the true scholar. Furthermore, to all, as to Quintilian, eloquence was a necessity that the treasure of learning might be put to its widest use, and no age could say with more conviction, *omnium regina rerum oratio*. That a man should speak Latin was taken for granted, but to speak *good* Latin required

¹ Read before the New England Classical Association, March 23, 1918.

² Quoted by W. H. Woodward, *Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance*, pp. 61 and 114.

training, and to give this training was the object of the numerous school colloquies, which aimed to teach the Latin of Terence and of Cicero's *Letters*, and to banish, as the Master of St. Paul's had it, "all barbarity, all corruption, all Latin adulterate, which ignorant, blind fools brought into this world, with which they poisoned the old Latin speech."¹

Among these colloquia those of Erasmus are justly the most famous, but the satire, the wit, the criticism, which give them their distinction and, above all, their controversial character, can be fully appreciated only by adults. To find the colloquy perfected as a means of teaching beginners we must go to two of his contemporaries, Mathurin Cordier, the teacher and the pupil of Calvin, and Juan Luis Vives, who, though a Spaniard, spent most of his life in Northern Europe, and whose coming to England under the patronage of his countrywoman, Catherine of Aragon, gave new impulse to education there.

Cordier, commonly called Corderius, was born in Normandy in 1479. He was educated and ordained at Paris and then entered on a long life as a teacher, notably at Paris, where Calvin was among his pupils, at Bordeaux, and at Geneva. Before going to Bordeaux in 1534 he had become an ardent disciple of Calvin, and after two years he followed him to Switzerland, where he was teaching in the Collège de la Rive at Geneva at his death. To his complete understanding of children and to his insistence on a sound foundation for scholarship may be traced his brilliant success as a teacher. He never felt it beneath his dignity to teach the elements. Early in his career we find him giving up the chair of rhetoric at Paris to teach the classes in grammar, and later he urged upon the authorities at Geneva the necessity for thorough grammatical drill before rhetorical display. A tribute to his success is found in a Latin grammar published at Paris in 1534, where one of the model sentences runs, *Ubi cumque docebit Maturinus Corderius, flore bunt bonae litterae*.

At the age of eighty-five, after fifty years spent in trying to make boys good and cultured, he published his four books of

¹ Foster Watson, *English Grammar Schools*, p. 325. To this book and to the same author's *Tudor Schoolboy Life* I am indebted for much in this paper.

Colloquia scholastica, which had been begun at the suggestion of Robert Stephanus, *amicorum meorum intimus*. They were dedicated *ad bene vivendi recteque loquendi studiosos* and aimed *ad pietatem et bonos mores cum litterarum elegantia coniungendos*. They were to show children of ten or eleven how Latin could be applied to subjects of daily interest to them. They were not meant to be learned by heart, but to be read carefully and to serve as models for conversations both in and out of class. There is no attempt to give complete vocabularies on particular subjects except in a few of the later dialogues. Thus a great many new words at a time are avoided and variety is secured from the first, but the same words and phrases keep recurring in different settings so that the child is being drilled without realizing it. The first are very short, six lines or so, and all are simple. The characters, of whom there are seldom more than two, are pupils, teachers, monitors; the names have usually no point for us, though they may have had for Cordier's pupils; the exception is Calvin, who appears in one dialogue kindly mending a pen for a smaller boy. The charm of these colloquies (for they have a charm) lies in their simplicity, in their natural and casual air, and, for modern readers, in the discovery that Cordier's pupils were much like our own.

The following¹ shows the method with very little boys:

Salve, praeceptor.

Sit vobis salus a Christo, pueri. Amen.

Iamne repetivistis?

Etiam, praeceptor.

Quis docuit vos?

Subdoctor.

Quid nunc vultis?

Ut per te liceat nobis parumper ludere.

Non est ludendi tempus.

Non petimus omnibus, sed nobis parvulis tantum.

Atqui pluit, ut videtis.

Ludemus in pergula.

Quo lusu?

Aciculis vel iuglandibus.

Quid mihi dabitis?

Dicemus nomina.

¹ I. 58.

Quot dicetis singuli?

Duo.

Dicite igitur.

Paper,² charta; ink, atramentum. Dixi.

A book, liber; a little book, libellus. Dixi.

A cherry, cerasum; walnuts, iuglandes. Diximus.

Quam belli estis homunculi! Ludite ad cenam usque.

Gratias agimus, praeceptor.

Many dialogues show boys repeating their lessons to each other, as they were urged to do, with exclamations familiar to every teacher. *O si tam bene diceremus coram praeceptore! Me miserum! putabam me recte tenere.* There is much chatter about school affairs; boys have been absent and must copy notes or catch up on school gossip, what the master said in chapel, who won the prizes, etc. Once we have a list of books used in class, *Rudimenta Grammatica*, *Colloquia*, a dictionary, a Testament in the vernacular, the Psalms, and the Catechism. One ambitious boy has bought Terence, Cato's *Moral Distichs*, and Cicero's *Letters*, that he may study ahead of the class, a purpose which reduces his less ambitious friend to admiring despair, *O me miserum, qui numquam didici quid sit studiosum esse!* There is much comparing of notes as to what they have brought for luncheon. They talk about borrowing and lending paper, pens, ink, knives, money. Books are lost and found under a variety of circumstances; once a Vergil has even been pawned.

Children ask permission to go on all sorts of errands—to the barber, to the shoemaker, to the market, to the inn to see visiting parents. One boy wants to go to his cousin's wedding; another has been sent for by his mother and he has a hateful suspicion that it may be to have his winter clothes made. Once a boy has been on a trip to Italy and returns full of his adventures.

Often they exchange information about their families. Parents are away or just returned; a sister has married an Englishman and congratulations are in order; a brother has gone off to be a soldier *patre absente, matre invita.*

The fourth book is intended to be more advanced; the colloquies are longer, contain more sustained description, and introduce more

² I translate from an edition published in England.

seriously moral questions. One is on the state of religion in England, another inquires whether one may repay evil with evil, another describes the duties of the submaster, and another the discipline of the school.

An effort is made to introduce numerous quotations, and we have them from Cicero's *Letters* (which were considered proper for beginners, while the speeches, as material for rhetorical analysis, came late in the course), from Quintilian, the very foundation of Renaissance education, from Cato, Publilius Syrus, Terence, Ovid, Horace's *Satires*, and Vergil. They had the great good fortune to read the *Moretum*, and one boy has been into the garden to gather the herbs to make the dish described in it.

An atmosphere of religious and moral training pervades the book. On the most ordinary occasions boys remind one another that God's will is law or that he is the source of all blessings. *Dei beneficio, Deo volente, Bene vertat Deus*, come readily to their lips, but they are saved from priggishness by their directness and simplicity. The boys are not all models either. There is the grumbler who hates to study, *Scio legere, scribere, Latine loqui, saltem mediocriter; quid opus est mihi tanta scientia? ego plura scio quam tres sacerdotes papistici*; the boy who confesses that he heard the text, but through the sermon *aut dormiebam aut cogitabam mille ineptias, ut solent pueri*; the mean boy who toadies to his friends who have money; the irritating boy who in class is always whispering, or snickering, or nudging his neighbor; the exasperating boy who is always asking where the lesson is "because he was absent yesterday," till the master losses patience, *Roga condiscipulos, nam si vellent singuli me interrogare de rebus a me palam dictis, quaeso quando finis esset?* Once a boy is beside himself with terror because he and his friends have been caught drinking by the master.

We get too a great deal of information about the families of the children. Many of the boys are sons of farmers, and they are called home to help with the vine dressing, or the vintage, or packing fruit, or piling wood. Some are sons of business men who go on journeys to France and England. Most are in comfortable circumstances; occasionally one is so poor that he cannot buy his own books; a few are rich, like the boy whose father has a great

game preserve, or the one who describes the elaborate dinner given by his uncle.

Sometimes the pupils live at home and bring their luncheons or lunch at the school table; sometimes they board in the school or in the town with the masters, like the boy who complains of his noisy boarding-place, where his room is so near the stairs that not even a cat can get by without his hearing it, and directly under the storeroom, so that he hears the moving of every box. He is obliged to stay there because the master of the house is an old friend of his father, and his father, not having much education himself, cannot see why quiet is needed for study. Other fathers complain that so much has to be spent on books, or wish their children to get educated in a year and be done with it. Oftener, however, the fathers are represented as giving sympathy and help; some regularly hear their children recite their lessons. One famous colloquy[†] shows the importance of Latin in a cultured family.

But your brother, how old is he?

Five.

What, does he speak Latin?

Why are you so surprised? We always have a tutor at home who is learned and conscientious and he is always teaching us to speak Latin. He never uses a word of English except to explain things. Why, we don't dare speak to Father, even, in anything but Latin.

Don't you ever speak English?

Only with Mother, and that at a special time, when she sends for us.

What do you speak with the servants?

We seldom speak to the servants and that only in passing; but the men servants address us in Latin.

How about the maids?

If we need to speak to them we use the vernacular, as with Mother.

How lucky you are to have such careful teaching!

We must thank God for giving us a father who takes such pains with our education.

Of course honor and praise for it belongs to the Father in Heaven.

But what are we doing? I hear them calling the roll.

Then we'd better hurry!

Mothers seem to be useful chiefly to put up luncheons; otherwise they are regarded as rather a hindrance to education. One

[†] 2. 50.

boy relates how his brother, who had been sent to Germany to learn the language, has come home because he missed his mother so, whereupon his friend sagely remarks, "See how foolish this excessive love for our mothers is!" "Well," rejoins the other, "it's our mothers' fault. Why do they love us so much?" "It's hard to repress nature." "Do you remember a verse of Horace that's like that?" "Yes. *Naturam expellas furca licet [sic]; usque recurret.*" Another boy asks a friend how his mother treats him, and on being told *Suavissime omninoque ex animi sententia*, observes darkly, *Fortasse in tuam perniciem*. It is easy to see that the "cockering" mother was not encouraged.

Of the school itself we get a pleasant picture,¹ with the master moving among his pupils like a wise father among his children, though his discipline is strict, with the result that "in our school of six hundred boys there is more quiet than in the rubbishy country schools of thirty or forty." Under the master are assistants and monitors, the latter chosen each month and impressed with respect for their office. The boys feel that the rules are just; no one is harshly dealt with except such as hate learning *cane peius et angue*, and a new boy is confidently assured that when the offense has not been public the punishment will not be. Morning chapel is held regularly. Wednesdays and Saturdays are half-holidays. Permission to leave the school grounds is readily granted, but boys must bring *testimonia* from their parents, or have other boys as witnesses that they have been where they were supposed to be.

Latin is the language of the school at all times, as we learn from a chapel talk of the master. "I hear that some of you speak English and no one reports it to me, from which I gather that you are all offenders. Therefore I remind you that you are all to speak Latin conscientiously and to report the names of all who disobey, that I may correct them." Later he explains that he will not punish those who let fall an English word or two, but only those who are systematically on the lookout for excuses to avoid Latin. Cordier, unlike many teachers, respected the vernacular and encouraged its use with very young children, but he saw no way to teach Latin except by consistent use during the period of instruction.

¹ See especially 4. 25.

The style of the *Colloquies* is admirably simple and direct and they are good Latin. Reynolds, the public orator of Oxford in the middle of the seventeenth century, said that when students asked him how they could improve their Latin "he ever bade them get Corderius's *Colloquies* . . . because in them they should find Terence and Tullie's elegancies applied to their foreign talk."¹ They became extraordinarily popular, and their uncontroversial character caused them to be used, with unimportant omissions, even in Catholic schools. They were used in England well into the nineteenth century.

Vives differs from Cordier in almost everything except his purpose. He was born in Valencia in 1492 of noble family. The boy, drilled in mediaeval scholasticism, who at seventeen called the classics "food for demons," became, with Erasmus and Budaeus, one of the great leaders of the Renaissance movement in Northern Europe. His enthusiasm for the new learning was aroused when he went to Paris in 1509, and still more at Bruges and Louvain, where he knew Erasmus. He looks back with horror at the dialectic and disputation of his school days, which turned out boys more incorrigible than Martial's poet: "They wrangle at breakfast, they wrangle after breakfast; before supper they wrangle and they wrangle after supper. At home they dispute, out of doors they dispute. They wrangle over their food, in the bath, in the church, in the town, in the country, in public, in private; at all times they are wrangling."² For some years he lived the life of a teacher in Bruges, in Louvain, where he lectured in the university besides taking private pupils, and in Paris. After 1522 he gave up teaching and devoted himself to writing. From 1522 to 1528 he spent part of each year in England, where he enjoyed the patronage of Queen Catherine and held for a time Wolsey's readership in humanity at Oxford. To Catherine he dedicated his *De institutione feminae Christianae* and at her request he wrote for the Princess Mary *De ratione studii puerilis*, two of the most important treatises on the education of women in the Tudor period, as his great work, *De disciplinis*, has been called the greatest Renaissance book on

¹ Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

² Foster Watson, *Tudor Schoolboy Life*, p. x.

education in general. In 1528, after being imprisoned six months for siding with the Queen in the matter of her divorce, he returned to Bruges, where he died when only forty-eight years old.

Unlike Cordier, Vives was a writer first and a schoolmaster after, but his success in teaching is attested by Sir Thomas More in a letter to Erasmus: "Who surpasses Vives in the quantity and depth of his knowledge? But what is most admirable of all is that he should have acquired all this knowledge so as to be able to communicate it to others by instruction. For who instructs more clearly, more agreeably, or more successfully than Vives?" And his continued interest is shown by the fact that only the year before he died he published his colloquies under the title, *Linguae Latinae exercitatio*.

Though the colloquies are dedicated to the eleven-year-old Prince Philip of Spain, they are not confined to subjects and vocabulary exclusively for children of that age. In them we find very little children learning their letters and playing games, boys going to school, youths starting on journeys on horseback, and older students working till midnight; this is in agreement with Vives's expressed theory that the ideal of the school is continuous training from the cradle to maturity. He has, however, quite as keen a sympathy with childhood as has Cordier, and he is able to treat even subjects outside the child's personal experience in such a way that he is interested in them. It has been acutely said that "the value of the *Exercitatio* may be gauged by the hesitation the reader feels in deciding whether the book is a boy's book or a scholar's book."¹

There are twenty-five dialogues, longer and more elaborate than those of Cordier, with more characters, more dramatic setting and action, and greater variety of subject. One feels that Vives looked forward to a wider and more brilliant life for his pupils than Cordier for the children of Genevan reformers. His own life had been passed at court or in the society of noble families and the atmosphere of his book shows it, though it is as far removed from snobbery as possible. Each dialogue is on a special topic, reading, writing, games, meals, the house, dress, journeys, the body, etc. The object is to provide

¹ Foster Watson, *English Grammar Schools*, p. 334.

a complete vocabulary on the subject treated, and it is done with thoroughness! For example, in the two dialogues on meals we find the names of some fifty articles of food, and in those on dress as many names of articles of clothing. There is no being drilled without realizing it here!

Although the scene is only occasionally in the school, we hear of it often. The small boy playing with his puppy is led by his father to wish to go to school *quo eunt beluae, redeunt homines*. The father chooses the teacher with few students, and the teacher, when arranging about tuition, makes the surprising statement, "If the boy does well, it will be little; if badly, a great deal," and, more surprising still, the father agrees. In the more advanced school lessons are heard an hour before sunrise, two hours in the morning, and two in the afternoon. Each master has his own classroom and subject. Boys study their lessons aloud to fix them better in the memory, and support the practice by the authority of "Pliny—whoever he was" (*nescio cuius Plinii*). Some get actually to shouting their tasks, and it is explained that they are *Hispani et Galli, paulo ferventiores*. Once we get a picture of the school dinner table, with the boys taking their turns at saying grace, both before and after dinner, and the masters keeping up the conversation and correcting the boys for putting their elbows on the table and dragging their sleeves in the soup.

Like Cordier, Vives is a strong supporter of the claims of the vernacular—indeed this is characteristic of all Spaniards—but Latin is the language of the school. One boy announces that he has just been witness of a *scelus capitale*: an ignorant schoolmaster near by has four times pronounced *volucres* with the accent on the penult. Many Greek words are thrown in on purpose to accustom the boys to hearing Greek.

A great many quotations from classical authors are introduced—from Terence, Martial, Macrobius, Quintilian, Ovid, Persius, Vergil, Valerius Maximus, Pliny, Plautus, Florus, Varro, Cicero, Plato, Aristotle. Boys are waked with appropriate verses from Martial and Persius, the scholar is sung to sleep with a lullaby from Ovid, the lovely spring day is described in verses from the *Georgics*, and a youth on a journey beguiles the way with a song from Politian,

which, he remarks, has the grace of antiquity. Indeed the numerous quotations helped to make the book popular, for, to quote one of the commentators,¹ "In Vives you will find little flowers of Latin eloquence which he has brought together from various most renowned authors, whilst there is nothing in his work which does not seem to suggest even the Christ, or at least the highest morality and sound education." While devout phrases are not so frequent as in Cordier, the tone is reverent, and Vives' ideal of *pietas litterata* is as high. In the dialogue on the boy prince, written expressly for Philip, a wise councilor is represented as showing him that since he will not venture to play a game, or ride a horse, or steer a boat without previous training, it is altogether necessary that he should learn wisdom before attempting to rule, and wisdom, he is taught, comes from learning and from virtue. The last two colloquies are really serious treatises laying down educational precepts. In one the boy is assured that if he has humility and industry he will attain the thorough education that befits a gentleman; and if he lives at court he will be beloved by all; though he will not care so much for that, since his chief care will be to find favor with God. In the other is described the spring of wisdom which "makes a man of a beast and an angel of a man."

There is much play of fancy and exercise of wit throughout. The names of the characters are often amusing: the master is Philiponus; Philippus and Misippus discuss horsemanship, Asotus and Abstemious drunkenness; we are shown over a new house by Vitruvius; the mature scholar is Pliny, assisted in his toil by Epictetus, Celsus, and Didymus; our friend Orbilius appears, having become with the years *rabiosus* as well as *plagosus*; and the good-for-nothing street urchin rejoices in the enchanting Plautine name of Titivillitium.

There are numerous references to contemporary persons and things. We are taken on a stroll through the author's native Valencia and shown the house where he was born. We get his views on the school teachers of Paris and Louvain. We learn that drivers and boatmen asked twice as much as their services were worth, and that nobles were proud of writing a bad hand. The

¹ P. Motta.

English Queen, Catherine of Aragon, is praised as a modern Griselda, and Vives himself is introduced, once as wrestling with the gout, and once as a writer of verse who composes with difficulty and sings his verses with the voice of a goose. In the dialogue on the body the painter Dürer is exhibiting his portrait of Scipio to two friends, who find all sorts of faults, which the artist explains away in most amusing fashion.

Two examples will serve to show how naturally and whimsically Vives has known how to enliven the dialogues. In the first, after we have learned the various articles of dress, we see the distracted maid getting the children off to school.¹

Let's go now.

What, without washing your face and hands!

Oh, your nagging would be the death of a bull, to say nothing of a man! I should think you were dressing a bride instead of a boy!

Eusebius, bring a basin and pitcher. Hold the pitcher higher. No, pour it slowly, not all at once. Get the dirt out of your knuckles . . . rub your eyebrows and eyelids and rub *hard* under your ears. Now take the towel and dry yourself. *Deum immortalem!* You have to be told every single thing. Couldn't you do anything of your own accord?

Oh, you bother me; I don't like you!

Kneel down now and say your prayer, and be careful, Emmanuel, that you don't think of anything else while you are praying. Here, wait a minute; hang this handkerchief on your girdle so that you can wipe your nose.

Am I ready now to suit you? . . . I bet I've wasted a whole hour dressing.

What if it took two? Where would you have gone or what would you have been doing? Digging, I suppose, or ploughing.

As if I hadn't plenty of things to do!

What a great man! so busy doing nothing!

Get out, you tease, or I'll shy this shoe at you!

The other passage is from the dialogue called "Garrientes" and shows four boys chattering about all sorts of subjects.

Where is your watch?

I lost it a while ago when I was running away from the greengrocer's dog after I'd stolen the plums.

I saw you running, from the window, but I couldn't see where you went to because Mother's hanging garden was in the way. Mother had it put up,

¹ "Surrectio matutina" (II).

though Father didn't want it and made a great row. But Mother persisted and got him to let it stay.

What about you? did you say anything?

I cried to myself. What else could I do when my dearest parents were quarreling? Though Mother did tell me to take her side; but I hadn't the heart to say a word against Father. So I was sent to school without my luncheon four days running by my angry mother, and she swore I wasn't her child anyway, but had been changed by the nurse, and she said she'd have the nurse before the *praetor capitalis*.

What's a *praetor capitalis*? Hasn't every praetor a head on?

I don't know. That's what *she* said.

A deaf woman goes by and one remarks, *Surdaster erat M. Crassus; sed illud peius quod male audiebat.*

A hunter passes, and another says:

He has a chum at home called Tricongius.

Call him an amphora.

No, a sponge.

No, the driest sand in Africa.

They say he's always thirsty.

I don't know whether he's always thirsty, but he's always ready to drink.

They gossip about their former schoolmates—one has gone into his father's shop; another, who used to carry off all the prizes, has grown dull; another has fallen in love (they collect this information from the postman, who has the engaging habit of reading any letter that is not sealed tight). They know town gossip too—

You know Antony, who lives in Fruit Lane by the Three Daws? Haven't you heard? Last year he cooked (*decoxisse*)!

What did he cook? Is that so dreadful? Isn't it done in every kitchen every day?

He cooked his accounts . . . and couldn't pay his bills.

Finally the monitor comes along and calls them to their books.

The *Colloquies* of Vives, like those of Cordier, became exceedingly popular. They were treated almost like a classic with vocabularies in the vernacular, and commentaries. There have been over a hundred editions published in various countries of Europe and even in Mexico. One of the most important editors,¹ himself brought up on the *Colloquies*, pays them an enviable tribute, "As a boy I so loved Luis Vives that not even now do I feel my old love for him has faded away from my mind."

¹ J. T. Freigius.